

additional and longer tours in Iraq in the months ahead. Like the emergency supplemental bill put together by the Appropriations Committee, the Defense authorization bill will continue the work of ensuring that the wounded from these conflicts receive the best care and support as they recover from their injuries.

In 430 BC, after the first year of the Peloponnesian War, the Greek historian Thucydides recorded the funeral oration delivered by Pericles, the great Greek general. Thucydides records that Pericles did not speak of the battles but, rather, of the glories—the glories—of Athens and what a privilege it was—what a privilege it was—for each Athenian to live in such a perfect place. Pericles said that the sacrifice of those fallen in battle to keep the nation strong left them with the:

Noblest of all tombs—the noblest of all tombs, I speak not of that in which their remains are laid, but of that in which their glory survives.

Pericles felt there could be no better place to live than Athens and no place more deserving of a soldier's sacrifice. Almost 2,500 years later, I feel confident that every soldier, sailor, airman, and marine who has fought and died in Afghanistan and Iraq probably felt the same way—yes—about the United States.

They were proud to be in uniform and ready to serve the Nation that they loved and held in such high regard. The Nation will ever mourn their loss and honor their sacrifice.

IRAQ

Mr. BIDEN. Mr. President, the President of the United States has recently stated that we are remaining in Iraq in order to defeat al-Qaida—a summary of a statement he made yesterday. Well, I wish to briefly state what I think the facts are.

Iraq has become a Bush-fulfilling prophecy. Al-Qaida was not there before the war, and it is there now. It is a problem, but it is not the primary problem. In my view, the President of the United States is inadvertently handing al-Qaida a propaganda victory here by vastly exaggerating its role in Iraq.

The sectarian war—the war between Sunnis and Shias, Sunnis and Shias killing each other—is the core problem, and our troops are caught in the middle of that war. New statistics from Iraq make it absolutely clear that sectarian violence is getting worse and now exceeds the levels immediately prior to the surging of American forces over a month ago.

The focus of the President of the United States on al-Qaida and Iraq, ironically, supports exactly what I have been arguing for. We need to dramatically limit the mission of U.S. troops in Iraq, getting them out of the middle of this sectarian civil war and refocusing their mission, which should be battling al-Qaida from occupying

territory in Anbar Province and training Iraqi troops. That would require far fewer troops and allow us to begin to remove American troops immediately and get the vast majority of our combat troops out of Iraq early next year, consistent with the Biden-Levin provision that was in the bill the President vetoed.

Our troops cannot end the sectarian war. Mr. President, 500,000 American troops will not end the sectarian war. What is required is a political solution, even as we continue to take on al-Qaida, which is a growing but not the primary problem in Iraq.

The President continues to bank on a farfetched hope. His hope is well-intended, but it is farfetched that the Iraqis will rally behind a strong democratic central government in Baghdad. But there is no trust within the Government in Baghdad. There is no trust of the Government in Baghdad by the Iraqi people. And there is no capacity by that Government in Baghdad to deliver either services or security.

Instead, the President should throw his full weight—the full weight of his office—behind the solution based upon federalism in Iraq, allowing the Iraqis to have control over the fabric of their daily lives, helping them bring into reality the Iraqi Constitution, where article 1 says: We are a decentralized federal system. We should not impose this. We do not need to. It is already in the Iraqi Constitution.

The President should call for a U.N. summit to get the world's major powers and Iraq's neighbors to push for a political agreement. It is not an answer to put up a straw man and say we remain there because of al-Qaida. What is an answer is to call for the permanent five of the United Nations to call for a regional conference; make Iraq the world's problem. I met with the Security Council permanent four, with us being the fifth, in New York on Monday. It is like pushing an open door. They are ready to respond to the President's request to do that. This is doable. This is necessary. The President should begin to focus on the facts, not the fiction of al-Qaida being our rationale for being there.

I will end where I began. Al-Qaida's presence in Iraq has become a Bush-fulfilling prophecy. They were not there before. They are there now. But they are not the primary problem. It is the vicious cycle of sectarian violence. It must end.

MEMORIAL DAY TRIBUTE

Mr. MCCONNELL. Mr. President, nearly 6 years after the worst terrorist attacks in American history, we have yet to be hit again on our soil. No one would have thought this possible immediately after the 9/11 attacks. But it is true because America is on offense in the war on terror.

Memorial Day is a time to reflect on the brave men and women of the Armed Forces who have made that

achievement possible, and to honor their sacrifice. Since 2001, over 3,800 Americans have died fighting in Iraq or Afghanistan. Over 60 were from Kentucky.

Our country must honor those who died in the line of duty as well as their families. The debt we owe them can never be repaid. I have had the honor of meeting many of the families of these servicemembers, and I have told them their loved ones did not die in vain.

Many who fought in the war on terror live to tell their stories, and I recently heard one I had like to share involving soldiers from Fort Campbell, KY. Four soldiers of the 1st Battalion, 506th Infantry Regiment, 101st Airborne Division lived up to the warrior ethos of never leaving a fallen or wounded comrade behind.

The city of Ramadi, Iraq, has seen some of the worst battles between coalition forces and the terrorists. One night in March 2006, SGT Jeremy Wilzcek, SGT Michael Row, PFC Jose Alvarez and PFC Gregory Pushkin, among others, made their way through the city's narrow alleys back to base.

Suddenly Sergeant Row saw two figures run into a house. Immediately suspicious, he stopped the team in its tracks just as machine-gun and small-arms fire and grenades erupted on the street in front of them. The soldiers took cover and returned fire.

Private First Class Alvarez noticed a fellow soldier had been hit and was lying in the middle of the storm of bullets. Without thinking twice, he ran into the line of fire and threw himself over his comrade. But he was too late. The soldier was dead.

Private First Class Alvarez kept firing until he had unloaded his weapon at the enemy, and then stood up and began to carry the soldier's body to a safe area. Sergeant Row provided cover fire, while Sergeant Wilzcek and Private First Class Pushkin ran into the firefight to help Private First Class Alvarez carry their colleague.

The three soldiers were nearing cover when two rocket-propelled grenades exploded yards away from them, knocking all three down and slicing Private First Class Alvarez's knee with shrapnel. But the three continued, finally reaching a safe area out of the path of bullets.

Sergeant Wilzcek and Private First Class Pushkin then ran back into the enemy's kill zone several times, rescuing more trapped soldiers. Sergeant Row continued to lay down cover fire, even though the same explosion that injured Private First Class Alvarez's knee had buried shrapnel deep in his elbow. Finally, every soldier made it to a safe area.

They were out of immediate danger. But gunfire all around them made clear the terrorists were still out to kill. Sergeant Wilzcek, Sergeant Row and Private First Class Pushkin made their way to the roof of a building, and with the advantage of the high ground, successfully killed, captured or drove off